

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

The President's Weekly Address

March 5, 2016

Hi, everybody. One of the things that makes America so strong is our spirit of innovation: our drive to invent and harness new technologies to tackle our greatest challenges. It's how we won the race to invent the lightbulb and the Internet; it's why we were first to the Moon and Mars. It's why I keep models of American inventions like the telegraph in the Oval Office. It's a daily reminder of the genius that's embedded in our DNA: the way we've always shaped the future through our ideas and discoveries.

That's truer than ever today, with the constant stream of new apps and tools and data that are still changing the way we live: from getting a ride to paying our bills to developing smarter ways to combat climate change.

That's why, next week, I'll travel to Austin, Texas, to visit South by Southwest. It's an annual gathering of some of our most creative thinkers, coders, makers, and entrepreneurs from across the country. And while I'm there, I'm going to ask everyone for ideas and technologies that can help update our Government and our democracy to be as modern and dynamic as America itself.

This has been a goal of mine since before I was President. On my campaign in 2008, we saw how technology could bring people together and help them engage as citizens in their own communities. So when I came to the White House, I wanted apply that experience to the Federal Government. It hasn't always been easy. And we've had some bumps along the way.

But we've also made good progress. Over the past few years, for example, we've done something that Government never has. We asked some of the sharpest minds from companies in Silicon Valley and across the country to come help us modernize the Federal Government for the way we live today. And they came ready to serve, tackling some of our biggest challenges, like high-tech special ops units.

These teams are partnering with the Government's existing policy and technical experts to reimagine the way we do business and deliver services that work better and cost less. Already, we've made it easier for students to find the college that's right for them, for immigrants to track the green card and naturalization process online, for veterans to access their medical records. And yes, after an initial false start, we've made it much easier for tens of millions of Americans to compare and buy health insurance and the peace of mind that goes with it.

That's what this is all about: making sure our Government of the people and by the people works better for the people in the 21st century. It's about Americans working together to make a real difference in people's lives. Because the easiest thing to do is to blame Government for our problems. Some people have made a career out of that. But our Founders trusted us with the keys to this system of self-government because it's the best tool we've got to settle our differences and solve our collective challenges. And it's only as good as we make it.

That's why I'm going to Austin and South by Southwest: to keep asking everyone from all walks of life, working inside or outside of Government, to help us make this democracy even stronger. And I hope you join us.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:05 p.m. on March 4 in the East Room at the White House for broadcast on March 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 4, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 5. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Subjects: Government organization and employees : Federal programs, improvement efforts; Science and technology : Public-private partnerships; Texas : Austin :: South by Southwest Conference and Festival.

DCPD Number: DCPD201600126.